City of Lafayette Staff Report

For:	Lafayette City Council
By:	Steven Falk, Lafayette City Manager
Date Written:	March 13, 2008
Meeting Date:	March 24, 2008
Subject:	**Funding for 211 Telephone Information Service**

Introduction

211 is a relatively new toll-free three-digit phone number that people can call to access information about local and social services. It exists in 41 states and is designed to work like, in conjunction with, and to relieve, the traditional 911 emergency phone number. The 211 network, for example, was essential to promulgate information about evacuations during the recent San Diego wildfires.

Detailed information about 211 service and its benefits are attached to this staff report.

Background

The Contra Costa Crisis Center recently launched 211 service in Contra Costa County, but still needs funding to operate the system. The Center estimates that it will cost $800,000 annually to operate the system. To its credit, the Center has raised substantive funds from private companies and non-profit agencies. There is still, however, a $190,000 funding gap. The Center has thus developed a proposal for the nineteen Contra Costa cities and towns to fill that gap by supporting 211 on a per capita basis for three years, with the County paying for the unincorporated areas. This strategy parallels that used in Alameda County.

The Center believes that the three year commitment is necessary to effectively launch 211 and that, during that time, other long term funding sources will become available. For details on the Center's plans, please see the attached "Funding Proposal."

Financial Impact

Lafayette's share for 211 would be $4,500 annually for three years.

Recommendation

Staff suggests that Lafayette should participate in funding this worthy program, and recommends that the Council direct the Administrative Services Director to include the $4,500 annual expenditure in the draft 2008/9 municipal budget.

11D

Funding Proposal

To: The Public Managers Association (PMA)
From: John Bateson, Executive Director, Contra Costa Crisis Center
Date: February 19, 2008
Subject: Funding for 211

Summary

211 is the national, toll-free, three-digit phone number that people call to access information about all kinds of local health and social services. It exists in 41 states—some for more than 10 years. Both on a daily basis and during times of disaster, 211 helps people get needed information quickly and easily.

Providing 211 service in Contra Costa costs $800,000 the first year, and slightly more thereafter. To date, we've raised about $610,000, leaving a gap of $190,000. This is the amount we're requesting from cities and the County to match what's already been committed, primarily by the private sector. It's anticipated that this funding will be needed annually for three years.

Background Information

People dial 911 for emergencies and 411 to find a phone number or address. With 211, people who need health or social services have another easy-to-remember, three-digit, toll-free number to call 24-7. The person who answers assesses each caller's needs and refers people to the most appropriate resources.

Many of the people who call 211 need shelter and food. Others need health care. Still others seek job training, financial assistance, or transportation. Senior services such as adult day care, home health, and meals on wheels also are in demand.

In communities without 211, people oftentimes don't know where to go to get help. They make multiple calls to try and access services, but because these calls are directed to the wrong places, the individuals are bounced around, becoming confused and frustrated.

It's even worse following a disaster. People call 911, which overloads emergency responders at a time when they're trying to deal with life-threatening situations. By offloading non-emergency 911 calls, 211 enables faster response to true emergencies. 211 also helps people get vital information quickly, such as whether they need to evacuate and, if so, where to go.

According to three university studies, 211 saves $4.5 million to $10 million per year in an area with one million people—the size of Contra Costa. This is because non-emergency 911 call volume is reduced, overlapping information and referral costs are reduced, public and private agencies don't spend valuable time answering misdirected calls, and community planning is improved.

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) authorizes 211 service in the state. No more than one 211 provider per county is permitted. The Contra Costa Crisis Center is the only agency in Contra Costa County, public or private, that meets all requirements of the CPUC: 1) operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year; 2) offers multilingual access and access to the hearing impaired; 3) manages and maintains a comprehensive database of local health and social service agencies; 4) coordinates with local and state disaster responders; and 5) has a local presence and support from local stakeholders. Unfortunately, CPUC authorization doesn't include funding.

We began operating 211 in test mode in 2006. Test mode means that the service is activated but not widely publicized. By January 2008 we had raised three-quarters of the annual funding needed to operate 211 (roughly $600,000 of $800,000). We hired multilingual, multicultural staff to answer day-time calls, and began publicizing 211. After-hours calls are answered by crisis line volunteers. When 211 is fully funded, we'll have dedicated 211 staff around the clock.

Nationwide, 211 service exists in all or parts of 41 states, plus Washington D.C., Puerto Rico, and portions of Canada. About 65 percent of the U.S. population has access to it. In communities where 211 is well established, 5 to 10 percent of the population calls annually. In Contra Costa County, this means 50,000 to 100,000 new calls per year. The average 211 call is six to eight minutes in length—much longer than a call to 411 or 911—because callers frequently have multiple needs that take time to assess.

James Matyas manages 211. For three years he supervised day-to-day operations at 211 Puerto Rico. Prior to this, he was line staff at 211 in Denver. Before that he was a 911 Spanish-language interpreter. Jim has answered 211 calls in five disasters, including the San Diego wildfires and Hurricane Katrina. He supervises three day-time call specialists and an evening staff person, as well as two database staff. Three 211 staff members are native Spanish speakers.

Funding

In most communities with 211, local governments (counties and cities) are the primary funders and the private sector provides matching support. Here in Contra Costa, because the public sector has been slow to fund 211, we've had to do it backwards—i.e. secure matching support first from the private sector. Current funders include:

- United Way of the Bay Area: $850,000 over five years
- John Muir/Mt. Diablo Community Health Fund: $500,000 over three to five years
- First Five Contra Costa: $116,600 in FY 2007-08, with 3 percent increases per year
- The Dean & Margaret Lesher Foundation: $70,000 over two years
- The Pacific Gas and Electric Company Foundation: $50,000 over two years
- The Firedoll Foundation: $15,000
- Chevron Corporation: $10,000
- The Wachovia Foundation: $7,500
- The Wells Fargo Foundation: $5,000
- Contra Costa County Employment and Human Services Department: $40,000
- Contra Costa County Community Development Department: $18,500
- City of Richmond: $15,000 in CDBG funding for our homeless hotline, now part of 211
- City of Antioch: $10,000 in CDBG funding for our homeless hotline, now part of 211
- City of Concord: $5,000 in CDBG funding for our homeless hotline, now part of 211
- City of Pittsburg, $5,000 in CDBG funding for our homeless hotline now part of 211
- City of Walnut Creek: $4,000 in CDBG funding for our homeless hotline, now part of 211

PMA Request and Sustainability

To fill the $190,000 gap, we propose that the 19 cities and towns in Contra Costa County support 211 on a per capita basis for three years, with the County paying for unincorporated areas (see the attached spreadsheet). This is the same strategy being used in Alameda County, only that county has greater public sector support. Alameda County made a multi-year pledge of $500,000 annually to 211, and 14 cities have made similar pledges that also total $500,000 per year. Every city is expected to contribute its share; if any one city withdraws, the plan collapses.

After three years, we anticipate that one or more of the following things will happen to provide long-term, sustainable funding:

- The California Public Utilities Commission will approve a universal access fee for 211, similar to the fee that all phone customers pay to subsidize 911 now. This is what Iowa did, and today the state-wide 211 system is supported entirely by this fee, which amounts to only pennies per person per month.

- The federal Calling for 211 Act will be passed. This legislation (S. 211 and H.R. 211) has bipartisan support and roughly 200 congressional co-sponsors. If approved, it'll up to $350,000 per year, on a pro-rated basis, for Contra Costa County.

- 211 will provide additional services, under new contracts. For example, 211 Los Angeles does all food stamp intake under contract with the county social service department. In San Diego, 211 does all Medi-Cal outreach under contract with the county health services department. In Ventura County, 211 answers special blue-colored phones in court houses and juvenile detention facilities under contract with the county department of corrections. Elsewhere, 211 is the number used in tobacco cessation campaigns, to find out where to go to get flu shots, to report breakouts of West Nile virus, and more.

In places where 211 is firmly established, people value it as much as 911, albeit in a different way. No community with 911 is likely to let it disappear. Similarly, it's unlikely that people in Contra Costa will allow 211 to end once it's fully in place.

City and County Funding for 211 to Fill $190,000 Gap

City	Contact Person	Population	%	Amount	Rounded
Antioch	Jim Jakel	100,945	10%	$18,632	$18,500
Brentwood	Donna Landeros	45,892	4%	$8,471	$8,500
Clayton	Gary Napper	10,924	1%	$2,016	$2,000
Concord	Ed James (interim)	124,436	12%	$22,968	$23,000
Danville	Joe Calabrigo	43,052	4%	$7,946	$8,000
El Cerrito	Scott Hanin	23,471	2%	$4,332	$4,500
Hercules	Nelson Oliva	23,834	2%	$4,399	$4,500
Lafayette	Steve Falk	24,191	2%	$4,465	$4,500
Martinez	Don Blubaugh	36,582	4%	$6,752	$6,750
Moraga	Philip Vince	16,338	2%	$3,016	$3,000
Oakley	Bryan Montgomery	29,074	3%	$5,366	$5,500
Orinda	Janet Keeter	17,693	2%	$3,266	$3,250
Pinole	Charlie Long (interim)	19,465	2%	$3,593	$3,500
Pittsburg	Marc Grisham	62,979	6%	$11,625	$11,500
Pleasant Hill	June Catalano	33,462	3%	$6,176	$6,000
Richmond	Bill Lindsay	103,468	10%	$19,098	$19,000
San Pablo	Brock Arner	31,216	3%	$5,762	$5,750
San Ramon	Herb Moniz	53,137	5%	$9,808	$10,000
Walnut Creek	Gary Pokorny	66,111	6%	$12,203	$12,250
Total Incorporated		866,270	84%	$159,894	$160,000
Unincorporated	John Cullen	163,107	16%	$30,106	$30,000
Total		**1,029,377**	**100%**	**$190,000**	**$190,000**

Population stats are 2006 estimates by the Contra Costa County Community Development Department.

Trial By Fire:

How 2-1-1's Regional Response to the 2007 Southern California Wildfires Underscored the Need for a Statewide Network

February 2008

Call 211 Help Starts Here

United Way

Dear Friends of 2-1-1:

After 35 years in the information and referral field, 21 years running the program that ultimately became 2-1-1 San Diego, and a long-held passionate belief in the potential of 2-1-1 to revolutionize the way people seek and receive help, I dialed 2-1-1 in late October.

It wasn't to check the functionality of the system, nor to connect with a particular 2-1-1 specialist, nor to be sure my cell phone had access to 2-1-1 service.

It was to secure information on how best to clear the debris from my Starvation Mountain home, which burned to the ground on October 22, 2007 — the same day that had long been planned as my official retirement as CEO of 2-1-1 San Diego.

I remember feeling very proud as a volunteer — one of more than 1,200 volunteers that came to 2-1-1 San Diego's aid — worked with me, despite a dearth of specific information on available resources to clear our property. As she guided me to some web sites that we reviewed together, I remember thinking, "She's working with me. Beside me."

And that is the whole point of 2-1-1, which was designated in 2000 by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) as the national telephone number for information and referral and is now available to approximately 75 percent of Americans and 84 percent of Californians.

As wonderful as it is to contemplate that 2-1-1 is available to more than 27 million Californians, the lessons of the wildfires must not go unheeded: **we must achieve 100 percent coverage with an integrated network that can function optimally in future disasters; and we must develop a sustainable funding model in partnership with stakeholders from every sector.**

In addition, even as we tackle the work ahead in California, we must continue to advocate for a truly national 2-1-1 system with consistent, stringent quality assurance standards; large-scale visibility of 2-1-1's benefits; and federal support for the Calling for 2-1-1 Act, which, if passed, will assist communities with the costs of operating their 2-1-1 systems.

As this report will detail — and many other post-disaster reports have also quantified over the past several years — the value of 2-1-1 is no longer in question.

Now it is incumbent upon all of us — as community leaders, citizens, legislators and funders — to understand the lessons learned and translate them into a strong commitment to 2-1-1.

Our communities deserve no less.

Sincerely,

Sara W. Matta
Former Executive Director
2-1-1 San Diego

2-1-1: A Critical Tool During Disasters

The National 2-1-1 Initiative was launched in July 2000 when United Way of America, the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems and several other partners successfully petitioned the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to assign 2-1-1 as the universal telephone number for information and referral services. At the time, 2-1-1 was seen largely as a means through which those in need would more easily access a human services system that is often disjointed and confusing to understand and access.

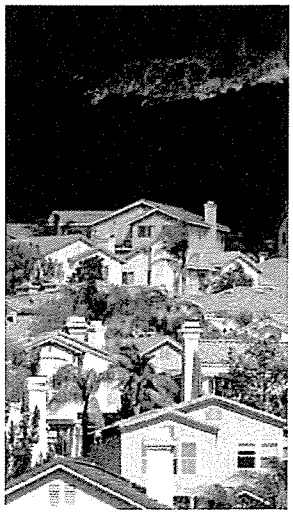
In the nearly eight years since the FCC formally assigned the number, it has become clear to creative citizens, community leaders, funders and government officials that 2-1-1, now available to approximately 75 percent of Americans, is a powerful tool that innovative communities can leverage to address their specific needs, and 2-1-1 has gained particular notice during times of disaster.

Even as early as 2001, during the September 11 attacks, the necessity for 2-1-1 as a means of aggregating resources and enhancing post-disaster assistance became obvious. In Connecticut, where a statewide 2-1-1 system was in place, the governor optimized the 2-1-1 infrastructure to assist those searching for loved ones employed at the World Trade Center — and later used the system to connect those suffering from the attack's aftermath to mental health services.

In contrast, New York City and Washington were left with what the Brookings Institution and the Urban Institute later called, in referring particularly to D.C., a "disjointed and haphazard" health and human services system. Their follow-up report, *Calling 2-1-1: Enhancing the Washington Region's Safety Net After 9/11,* specifically recommended the implementation of a 2-1-1 system to provide a single access point through which agencies' services could be effectively coordinated. This need was particularly evident in New York City, where hundreds of unique 800 numbers were launched to assist those needing information, but ultimately added to the confusion.

Following the Katrina and Rita disasters, FEMA issued a follow-up study, the *2005 Hurricane Season After-Action Report,* in which it both recognized the accomplishments of 2-1-1 and made a strong recommendation that states move forward on statewide 2-1-1 implementation.

> "2-1-1 is an essential service for our city residents every day of the year, and even more critical to support our emergency personnel in the event of a natural or man-made disaster."
>
> **Merrilee Boyack**
> **Deputy Mayor**
> **City of Poway**



In October 2007, Southern California communities experienced first-hand the role 2-1-1 can play during a disaster. Twenty separate wildfires consumed large parts of six Southern California counties; in all, more than 500,000 people would be evacuated from homes in San Diego County alone. During these evacuations, major highways were closed as new fires began and existing fires spread. Information about evacuations, shelters, and road closures changed by the minute.

Over the period of October 21 through October 25, 2007, more than 130,000 calls to 2-1-1 were answered in the counties of Los Angeles, Riverside, Orange, San Bernardino, San Diego and Ventura, an increase of 764 percent over the same period the previous week. In a single day, October 24th, the six call centers answered more than 41,000 calls (with 2-1-1 San Diego answering 81 percent of them), comparable to the call volume of a mid-sized call center for an entire year. Unlike other types of disasters, wildfires pose the challenges of shifting evacuations, fires burning and expanding over days, continuously changing traffic closures, and simultaneous situations of response and recovery.

This report summarizes the enormous accomplishments of 2-1-1 and its multi-sector network of partners and volunteers during the October 2007 wildfires; examines the development of 2-1-1 California, particularly its ongoing commitment to disaster preparedness; and makes recommendations on how best to build upon the lessons of October 2007 to achieve and maintain the maximum state of readiness.

2-1-1 Roll Out Across California

(As of 2/11/08)

Call 211
Help Starts Here

2-1-1 Activation Dates

- 2-1-1 Active
- 2008
- 2009

Planning Status

- Planning
- Pre-Planning Discussions
- No Planning

50 25 0 50 100

Created by OES-GIS, K.Higgs
Projection— Teale-Albers
March 30, 2007, Updated February 07, 2008
/data/admin/cairs/cairs211_Rollout_0208/mxd

OES

The History of 2-1-1 California

In 2003, following statewide planning meetings among a variety of multi-sector stakeholders, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) issued an Order establishing the parameters under which 2-1-1 could be provided in California. 2-1-1 California, an unincorporated collaboration, was formed in 2004 through an agreement between the California Alliance of Information and Referral Services (CAIRS) and United Ways of California (UWCA). More recently, 2-1-1 California has expanded its partnership to include Volunteer Centers of California and the Governor's Offices on Services and Volunteerism and Emergency Services. Since the first counties launched 2-1-1 services in California in 2005, 19 counties covering approximately 84 percent of the state have launched 2-1-1 service, with full coverage anticipated in 2010.

The Need for 2-1-1 in California

While the U.S. population as a whole is expected to increase at a rate of 13.4 percent between 2000 and 2015, California's rate of increase is projected at 22.3 percent.

Even as California's population is growing, the challenges of serving that population are increasing proportionately. The most frequent non-disaster-related service calls to comprehensive information and referral agencies — including those in California — are for needs such as emergency shelter; protective services including child and elder abuse; rent, food, and utility bill assistance. In terms of these indicators, California is particularly challenged.

With 14 percent of Californians currently living in poverty — nearly 18 percent in Los Angeles County — California continues to rank last among the states in affordability of rental housing, with the necessary average hourly wage to afford a two-bedroom rental unit projected at $21.24 per hour, assuming a 40-hour work week. The Annie E. Casey Foundation's *2007 KIDS COUNT Data Book: State Profiles of Child Well Being* reports that more than one third of children in California live in families where no parent has full-time, year-round employment.

An October 2006 report by the California Budget Project documented an alarming number of California's high-need indicators:[1]

- More than one in eight Californians had incomes below the federal poverty level in 2005, notably higher than in 2001;
- The share of California children living in poverty rose from 16.4 percent in 2001 to 18.5 percent in 2005, ranking California as the 17th worst state in terms of child poverty;
- The number of Californians living without health insurance rose to 20.6 percent, with only five states indicating higher shares of uninsured non-elderly residents;
- The number of California children without health insurance rose to 1.35 million in 2005, from 1.17 million only one year prior.

Given the sheer enormity of California's human services challenges, the cultural diversity of the state (almost 40 percent do not speak English at home), and the fact that there are approximately 180,000 nonprofit organizations in the state[2], the need for single access point through which comprehensive, accurate information may be secured is evident.

[1] "New Census Data Show Few Gains for California." Published by the California Budget Project. Updated October 2006. Found at http://www.cbp.org/publications/documents/0608_pp_poverty_000.pdf

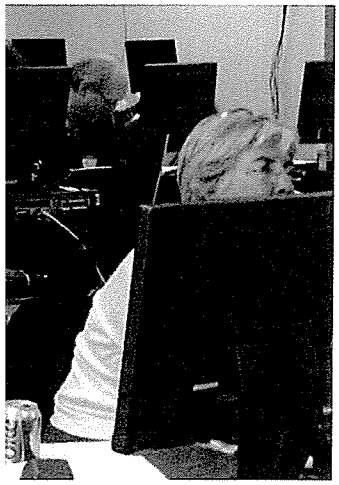
[2] The Center for Non-Profit Management referenced 178,223 nonprofit organizations currently registered in CA according to Guidestar.

That need is significantly more acute during crises or disasters, and victims of wildfires, which are characterized by simultaneous evacuations and recoveries of long duration, are particularly prone to what has been termed the "second disaster":

> The process of seeking help from government, voluntary agencies and insurance companies is fraught with rules, red tape, hassles, delays and disappointment for survivors of disaster. Feelings of helplessness and anger are common.[3]

It was exactly those feelings of "helplessness and anger" that 2-1-1 was able to ameliorate following the 2005 Gulf Coast hurricanes, according to a Crisis Unit Coordinator who remained on the front lines during the many months of recovery:

> "2-1-1 is the mental health hub and pulse of this area....2-1-1 has been instrumental in saving the sanity and lives of many who are still struggling to find their way through this mess."
>
> *Cecile Tebo, Crisis Unit Coordinator*
> *New Orleans Police Department*



"Information on temporary shelter, school closures, animal care, medical needs, various social services, or anything else related to the fire is now as easy as simply dialing 2-1-1."

Paul Biane, Chairman
Board of Supervisors
County of San Bernardino

A Vision of Statewide Disaster Readiness

Since its inception, 2-1-1 California has been grounded in the vision of an integrated statewide network of independent call centers that can reduce the confusing maze of information and services that overwhelms individuals who need help, both in addressing everyday challenges and in times of disaster.

In addressing 2-1-1's potential role in a significant California disaster, the 2-1-1 California Business Plan specifically describes a statewide network that will be ready to:

- Connect people with the specific services they need, relieving first-responder organizations
- Help federal, state and local governments get accurate, current information to the public
- Provide reassurance to callers by responding to rumors and letting callers know where they can call for support
- Work directly with service providers to ensure the dissemination of accurate information about the availability of services
- Channel the efforts of those who want to help — from spontaneous volunteers to people wishing to donate material goods or money — to the right places that can benefit most immediately and directly

As 2-1-1 California moves forward with this vision of a fully integrated, statewide 2-1-1 system, the multi-sector local and statewide partnerships that have been integral to the success of 2-1-1 California will be more critical than ever:

- The Governor's Office of Emergency Services, which serves on the 2-1-1 California leadership team, hosted a September 2007 2-1-1 summit, and has provided significant funding through a homeland security grant for statewide technology planning and disaster preparation
- Local Offices of Emergency Services that partner closely with local 2-1-1 providers through their Emergency Operations Plans
- Volunteer Centers of California, which serves on the 2-1-1 California leadership team and provides a vital link between local 2-1-1s and the Volunteer Centers in each community

[3] Diane Myers, R.N., MSN: *Psychological Recovery From Disaster: Key Concepts For Delivery of Mental Health Services*: NCP Clinical Quarterly 4(2): Spring 1994

- California Volunteers, Office of the Governor, which serves on the California 2-1-1 leadership team and strengthens the connection to the governor's efforts and priorities
- Strong local relationships with public officials:
  - The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors has consistently stood behind 2-1-1 LA, awarding $5.5 million each year since the 2005 launch, investing almost $2 million in new state-of-the-art call technology, and establishing formal contracting relationships for public-information services during emergency/disaster situations.
  - Chairman Greg Cox of the San Diego County Board of Supervisors has consistently supported 2-1-1 San Diego.
  - There has been growing support from cities, including a new task force committee of the League of Cities to further develop partnerships between 2-1-1 San Diego and local cities.
- Financial support from private organizations to develop and implement 2-1-1:
  - Local First 5 commissions across the state have provided more than $17 million in operational support[4] to their local 2-1-1 counterparts in recognition of the 2-1-1's value to their 0 - 5 year-old target population.
  - Local United Ways statewide provided more than $3 million in operational support[5] to their local 2-1-1 providers or emerging 2-1-1 services.
  - In 2001, the California Endowment awarded a $500,000 planning grant to support the development of 2-1-1 California and its statewide business plan.
  - In 2005, the Irvine Foundation awarded a $75,000 planning grant to support the development of 2-1-1 California and its statewide business plan.
  - Kaiser Permanente Foundation has provided operational grants to 2-1-1 in Southern California and the Bay Area, grants to the six fire-impacted counties to help offset costs related to wildfire response, and, most recently, a $50,000 grant to support statewide implementation of the 2-1-1 California business plan.
- Businesses such as Qualcomm, IBM, Google, and AT&T, who recognize the value of 2-1-1 to the communities they serve and support the development of a strong 2-1-1 infrastructure

As the next sections illustrate, the events and lessons of the 2007 wildfires demonstrate that the Vision articulated by the 2-1-1 California Business Plan was — and remains — accurate:

> **2-1-1 California Vision:** All Californians will have access to current community, health and disaster information 24 hours each day through a free, easy-to-remember telephone number.

In the wake of the wildfires, the only change to that vision is the substitution of the word "must" for the word "will."

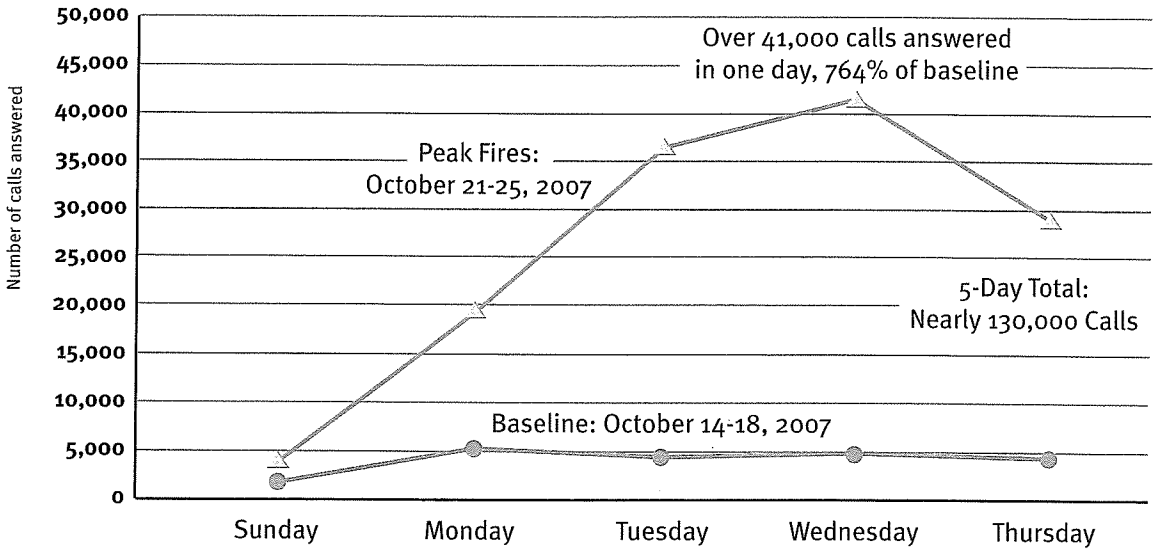
2-1-1 California Mission:

To create and sustain a statewide network that brings together high-quality local and regional 2-1-1 call centers and provides benefits beyond what is possible independently.

Goal: 100% of Californians have access to high-quality 2-1-1 services by 2010.

[4] Beginning in 2001
[5] Beginning in 2004

California Wildfire 2-1-1 Response
Total Number of Calls Answered



"The 2-1-1 service was an invaluable resource during the firestorm in that it freed up calls from 9-1-1. We could give information on repopulated neighborhoods to the 2-1-1 operators. We saw 9-1-1 calls diminish over time because of that."

Bill Gore
Undersheriff
San Diego County

2-1-1 and the 2007 California Wildfires

During the 2003 wildfires in San Diego County, the public was told to access many different numbers for fire-related information. In 2007, however, there was one number — 2-1-1.

As the Southern California wildfires erupted in late October 2007, the six counties that were ultimately named disaster areas — Los Angeles, Riverside, Orange, San Bernardino, San Diego, and Ventura — were equipped with fully operational 2-1-1 systems (see 2-1-1 coverage map on page 4), and all six had been long-time, active participants in a 2-1-1 Southern California Collaborative.

2-1-1 San Diego, serving the area of greatest impact, was previously established as an official partner with the County's Office of Emergency services as the central source of emergency information for the public. Because of this pre-established partnership, 2-1-1 San Diego learned immediately about the activation of the County's Emergency Operations Center on the first day of the fires.

Through an established relationship with the local Office of Emergency Services, 2-1-1 San Diego was named on information crawlers on television, noted as the number to call during daily news briefings, mentioned in radio stories, and was always included in OES press releases and on their web site. In addition, the Sheriff's Department all carry 2-1-1 reference cards, as do many fire and rescue units. From the beginning, 2-1-1 was a central and integral part of the two-way communication necessary during this disaster, and continues to provide recovery information and referrals through Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) and the Coordinated Assistance Network (CAN).

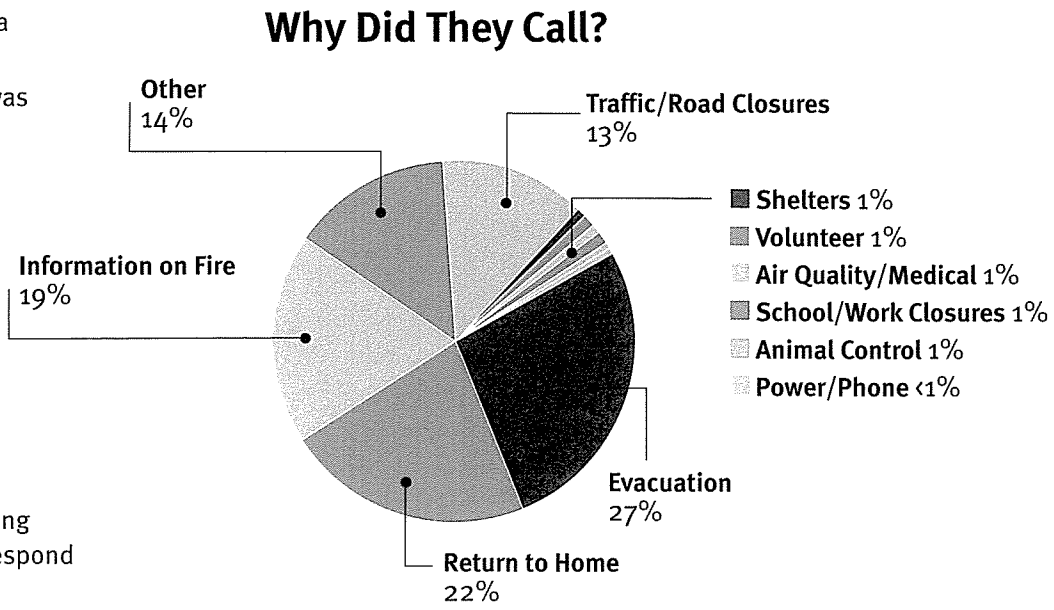
San Diego County deployed a computer-generated Reverse 9-1-1 system to alert citizens to evacuate immediately. Upon receiving the call, many residents sought out the human contact of a 2-1-1 specialist to confirm the evacuation order and to secure information about the best routes. Because of careful quality control of information, 2-1-1 was a reliable source of information not only to residents, but to the county departments as well, providing essential services such as rumor control, identification of unmet community information needs, and spontaneous donations management.

Reinforcements in both technological and human capacity were needed throughout the region to meet the tremendous call demand.

- The 2-1-1 Southern California Collaborative held daily conference calls to share information, identify gaps in resources and generate solutions together.
- Through the Enhanced Call Centers model that is integral to the vision outlined in the 2-1-1 California Business Plan, call surges can be managed effectively such as when Ventura County's 2-1-1 experienced spiked calls from multiple fire-impacted counties but was able to redirect Orange County calls to 2-1-1 Los Angeles County with less than an hour's notice.
- 2-1-1 San Diego received 25,000 on the second day of the fires, spiking to more than 44,000 calls on the third day, a 7,000 percent increase over normal operations. To effectively handle this level of call volume, 2-1-1 San Diego needed an emergency technological and telephonic ramp-up. This was provided by AT&T, Google, IBM and Qualcomm, with support from San Diego County.
- Through an existing partnership with the local volunteer center and strong connections with public departments, including the district attorney and children's services, more than 1,200 volunteers augmented staff, answered calls and donated 7,000 hours of volunteer time in San Diego alone.
- Volunteers from other California 2-1-1 providers as well as the United Way of America/Alliance of Information and Referral Systems Disaster Response Team provided support throughout the region.
- Bank of America provided a volunteer team of highly trained call specialists to relieve staff at 2-1-1 Los Angeles.
- Overall, each local 2-1-1 put services in place to meet the immediate needs of its community.

In addition to the two-way communication offered to residents, 2-1-1 provided valuable services to county and local agencies when they experienced challenges within their own operating systems:

- A first responder in San Diego County, unable to reach dispatch or 9-1-1 to report exposed power lines, called 2-1-1 to report the location of affected utility poles.
- The San Diego sheriff's office optimized 2-1-1's technological capability to provide a three-way patch among 2-1-1, the sheriff's office and mobile home residents trapped by a surrounding fire.
- In some cases when reverse 9-1-1 was misprogrammed, 2-1-1 collected information from affected callers and helped reverse 9-1-1 to track down the error.



Southern California 2-1-1s demonstrated their ability to provide vital two-way communication to tens of thousands of residents during a disaster. While the technological capacity to handle surges can be established, a sustainable network among call centers across the state is vital to respond effectively to future disasters.

Moving Forward: Translating Lessons Learned into Action

With the lessons of the 2007 wildfires fresh in the minds of all who experienced them, the value of a 2-1-1 is increasingly expressed in terms of statewide disaster preparedness. At a January 9, 2008, follow-up workshop hosted by the California Public Utilities Commission and attended by representatives of telecommunications companies, city and government officials and 2-1-1 system leaders, Maribel Marin, executive director of 2-1-1 Los Angeles County and chair of both 2-1-1 California and the 2-1-1 Southern California Collaborative, noted the following:

> "....**an integrated system** could provide a single point of coordination and provision for two-way communication with the public on disaster-related information; provide timely, emergency public information support from unaffected regions to impacted regions; and reduce pressure on critical operational communications such as 9-1-1"

The 2007 Southern California wildfires underscored the following four lessons for assuring effective disaster response:

Statewide disaster planning is absolutely critical and must draw upon the San Diego partnership model

- The local San Diego model of a strong, formalized partnership with the Office of Emergency Services (OES) ensured that 2-1-1 had been incorporated into local assistance center plans, public announcements, and two-way communications plans.
- Involvement in local Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) is important prior to disasters to establish relationships important in response and recovery efforts.
- A statewide network will provide a single point of coordination and information support for public agencies.
- An integrated network will allow calls to shift to 2-1-1 providers in less affected regions, minimizing the need to send more people into affected areas.
- However, **2-1-1 must be sufficiently funded to sustain professional staff and to support the needed capacity to respond to major spikes during a disaster.**

State agencies and other partners must embrace the innovative ways 2-1-1 can address their information needs during disasters

- With appropriate funding and capacity, 2-1-1 can quickly ramp up to support local agencies by functioning as the go-to number for evacuation information, medical services, school closures, and various social services.
- During long-term recovery and rebuilding, 2-1-1 remains a critical piece of the community fabric, assisting citizens suffering through the "second disaster," the period of helplessness that remains long after the emergency responders are gone.

Effective planning must incorporate an understanding that while disasters are local, they are also very often regional and statewide crises and therefore require 100% coverage with regional collaboration

- 29 counties in California currently have no plans for providing 2-1-1 service.
- Regional collaboratives recently formed in the Bay Area and in the Central Valley need support; additional collaboratives will be necessary to assure quality 2-1-1 service in disasters statewide.

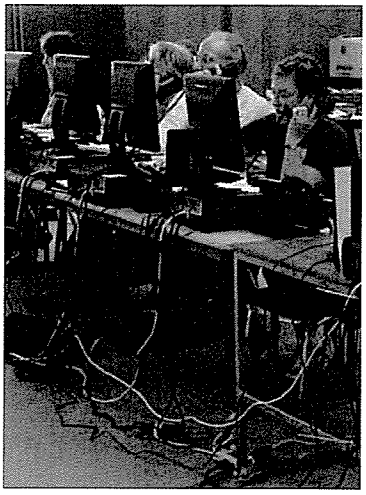
All Californians must join together to ensure that Enhanced 2-1-1 service is available to all

- Immediate funds are needed to enable priority, one-time investments to create the statewide network through linkage of centers and resource database integration.
- Community leaders, legislators, funders and citizens must plan comprehensively to ensure ongoing operational funding for 2-1-1 California.

2-1-1 California is committed to realizing its goal of assuring 2-1-1 services for 100% of Californians by 2010, and playing a critical role as one part of the State's comprehensive and effective disaster response team.

"I was in the 2-1-1 call center during the first hours of the fire and saw firsthand how quickly 2-1-1 San Diego was able to ramp up and take on the critical role of keeping citizens informed during the wildfires. 2-1-1 has become the centerpiece of our region's communications system, providing critical health and community information to people who need it."

Greg Cox
Chairman
San Diego County Board of Supervisors



2-1-1 California

www.211california.org
Maribel Marin, mmarin@211la.org
David M. Smith, dsmith@vcunitedway.org

United Way of America

701 North Fairfax Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314-2045
www.unitedway.org